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SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF TERRORIST AND SIGNIFICANT SECURITY INCIDENTS IN
ALGERIA, OCTOBER 2009

REFS: Algiers 01006 and previous

¶1. (SBU) INTRODUCTION: This cable is a summary of major terrorist incidents and threats as well as significant security-related incidents (including criminal activities and civil disturbances) for Algeria during the month of October 2009. The information was obtained from open sources, news reports, and RSO police contacts. Press-based information should not be taken as exact or definitive but can be used to track countrywide patterns and trends. Reported activities are maintained in a master database utilized by the RSO in formulating post policy guidelines related to life safety and travel within Algeria. Please note that Algerian media frequently still refer to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) by its previous name, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). End introduction.

¶2. (U) Terrorist-specific trends: During the month of October 2009, there was a slight increase in terrorist activity as compared to September 2009. With seven security forces killed (to include police, military and gendarmerie) and 30 injured in 47 reported attacks/confrontations between security forces and terrorist elements throughout the country, Algerian security forces encountered ten additional attacks and two additional security force deaths compared to the month of September (see reftel).

The deadliest attack in the month of October occurred in the Kabylie region (64 miles east of Algiers) in the municipality of Maatka, 16 miles south of Tizi Ouzou. An unidentified group of terrorists set up an ambush on a road linking the two localities of Souk-el-Etnine and Mechtras. This connector road is used by the Canadian company SNC-Lavalin to caravan to and from its water pipe project site. Local security forces were on their way to pick up the Canadian engineers on October 22, 2009, when the van was overwhelmed by heavy arms fire. Seven local security guards were immediately killed and the driver died several days later in the hospital from injuries sustained in the attack. No Canadians were killed or injured in this attack.

¶3. (U) Combined military forces conducted 15 successful, large-scale counter-terrorism operations in the Kabylie regions of Constantine, Tizi Ouzou, Boumerdes, and Bouira during the month of October. In addition, sweeping counter-terrorism operations were conducted in the mountainous areas of Jijel, M'Sila, Medea, and Setif, as well as the desert regions of Ghardaia, Bechar, and el-Bayadh. These operations resulted in 108 arrests and 65 deaths of suspected terrorists.

¶4. (U) Nineteen bombs, ten of which were defused prior to detonation, were reported in the month of October, resulting in two deaths (one military officer, one communal guard) and eight seriously injured (four military officers, three gendarmes, and one civilian).

¶5. (U) Civil Unrest/Riots: While riots over poor living and road conditions were reported in Annaba and Tizi Ouzou (some of which were connected to student and teacher strikes going on during much of October), the most noteworthy riot in the month of October occurred in Algiers. On October 19th, hundreds of protesters refused to vacate a shantytown area in Diar Echems after being repeatedly warned by police. Poor Algerians had illegally built temporary housing in this area of the city due to the lack of available public and/or affordable housing in Algiers. Protestors reportedly erected roadblocks and, when confronted by security forces, aggressively attacked riot police with bricks, stones, and molotov cocktails. Police in riot gear responded with tear gas and extensive arrests in an attempt to quell the outbreak. Battles were reportedly intense with some inhabitants throwing stones, furniture, appliances, and other heavy objects down on police. The number of rioters was never confirmed but reportedly grew into the hundreds. The rioters also represented a multi-generational effort, with parents, grandparents, and children protesting poor housing conditions together. Police succeeded in dispersing the riot after three full days of protest activity.

Monthly statistics are as follows:

Bombings: 19 (10 bombs defused prior to explosion)

Civilian deaths: 9

Security forces killed: 7

Kidnapping: 6

Terrorists killed: 65

Terrorists arrested: 108

Terrorists arrested/surrendered: 3

False roadblocks: 2

Riots: 3

¶6. (U) DETAILS: Below please find detailed local news reports of select terrorist/security-related incidents throughout the month of October.

October 2:

-In Setif (187 miles southeast of Algiers), a terrorist was killed in Djabell Boutaleb during a clash between the army and a local terrorist group.

-In Bouira (76 miles southeast of Algiers), four terrorists were refueling their vehicles and were confronted by military paratroopers and civilians who were helping the paratroopers. One terrorist was killed, another injured, and a Kalashnikov rifle recovered.

-A woman in Medea (59 miles south of Algiers) was kidnapped by an unknown terrorist group that demanded 200 million dinars (about USD 2.8 million) in ransom for her safe return. No further information has been reported on this kidnapping.

October 3:

- In Tizi Ouzou (64 miles east of Algiers), military forces ambushed a group of terrorists in the locality of Ouacif. The ambush resulted in the deaths of two terrorists and the recovery of several Kalashnikov rifles.

October 6:

-Army troops killed two terrorists in the mountains of Tizi Nekouilelle in the wilaya of Bouira (76 miles east of Algiers).

-Military forces killed two terrorists in Ouacif, situated 48 kilometers from Tizi Ouzou (64 miles east of Algiers), and recovered two Kalashnikov rifles.

-In M'sila (155 miles southeast of Algiers), three unknown suspects attempted to kidnap an individual in Sidi Aissa. The victim was immediately released when the kidnappers apparently decided to pursue a different target.

October 7:

-In Beyadh, military forces killed two terrorists in the region of Khither.

-In Skikda, local residents in the town of Djenane el-Annabi rioted for hours, burning tires and trunks of trees, and demanded a better

state road.

October 9:

-Military forces killed ten terrorists from the el-Moulathamine battalion of AQIM in an operation on the border crossing between the wilayas of Ghardaia and Bechar. Three military forces were killed and five injured in the operation.

October 10:

-In Bouira (76 miles southeast of Algiers), a terrorist group set up a fake road block in the municipality of Kamza. Terrorists robbed several passengers before escaping.

October 11:

-In Tizi Ouzou (64 miles east of Algiers), a military officer was killed in a bomb explosion in Draa el-Mizan during an anti-terrorist operation.

October 13:

-Reported gang violence in the vicinity of Bab el-Oued, Algiers, involving over 50 individuals between the ages of 16 and 22, resulted in ransacked shops, the destruction of over 50 vehicles, and dozens of knife injuries. A curfew was enforced in the neighborhood for several days following the violence that the local press dubbed "terror night."

October 14:

-In Jijel (244 miles east of Algiers), a military officer was injured in a bomb explosion in the Chekafa Mountains.

October 17:

-In Tizi Ouzou (64 miles east of Algiers), one military officer was killed and three injured in a bomb explosion in the town of Draa el-Mizan during an anti-terrorist operation.

-In Boumerdes (31 miles east of Algiers), security forces killed a terrorist emir named L. Mourad alias Abu Nouh Abi Khitma Essalafi, who was reportedly the coordinator between various terrorist groups acting within the GSPC (AQIM). He was killed in an ambush in the Delys Mountains.

October 18:

-In Djelfa (171 miles south of Algiers), security forces killed four terrorists and arrested three others belonging to the same terrorist group. Three Kalashnikov rifles and a 4x4 vehicle were recovered. The operation was conducted following information given by an arrested terrorist about the existence of a terrorist group in Djelfa coming from Tissemssilet. In the same wilaya (Djelfa), security forces dismantled a terrorist support network a few days prior to conducting the above-mentioned operation.

-A terrorist was killed and another injured near the municipality of Djimla, on the border between Jijel and Setif (224 miles east of Algiers).

-Military forces in the wilaya of el-Ouad (407 miles southeast of Algiers) killed three terrorists and recovered several weapons and ammunition.

October 19:

-In Diar Echems, a suburb of the capital Algiers, violent clashes ensued between local security forces and Algerians who refused to vacate an illegal housing slum, despite government orders to do so. Rioters threw molotov cocktails and rocks at local police and set several trees and tires on fire. Rioting lasted for several days, and dozens were reported injured, to include a seriously injured police officer.

-In Jijel (224 miles east of Algiers), military forces killed two terrorists and recovered one Kalashnikov rifle in an ambush.

-In Tizi Ouzou (64 miles east of Algiers), a police officer was killed by an unknown terrorist group.

October 21:

-In Setif (187 east of Algiers), two civilians from the village of Tachouda were injured in a grenade explosion.

October 22:

-Seven local security guards for the company SNC Lavalin were killed in an ambush in the wilaya of Tizi Ouzou in the Kabylie region (64 miles east of Algiers). Algeria's interior minister called this incident "the most serious attack in Algeria since late July."

-In Constantine (269 miles east of Algiers), a military officer was killed in a full-scale operation conducted by army troops and supported by combined forces from the heights of Djebal Ouahch in Kef Lakhal locality. One military officer was killed and four others were wounded. Three terrorists were also killed, and three weapons and two pairs of binoculars were recovered.

October 25:

-In Tipaza (44 miles west of Algiers), terrorists set up a false roadblock in Douar Boutajine (4 miles from Tipaza). The terrorists opened fire on a passing car and robbed the passengers. No deaths or injuries were reported.

October 27:

-In Boumerdes (31 miles east of Algiers), three gendarmes were injured in a roadside bomb in the town of Benchoud.

-In Tebessa (396 miles southeast of Algiers), a military officer was injured in a bomb explosion.

October 28:

-In M'sila, 155 miles southeast of Algiers, a communal guard was killed in a bomb explosion during a counter-terrorism operation conducted by military forces.

-In Amel, the southeast region of Boumerdes (31 miles east of Algiers,) military forces, acting on a tip regarding the location of a terrorist group, killed one terrorist and destroyed his hideout, retrieving ammunition.

-At the border between Bordj Bouariridj and Bejaia, the bodies of five terrorists were recovered by military forces. The bodies were reported to belong to members of an AQIM battalion who were murdered by fellow battalion members after expressing their desire to turn themselves in under the amnesty program.

October 30:

-In Constantine (270 miles southeast of Algiers), one military officer was killed and four injured during a counter-terrorism operation conducted by combined forces in Djebal Ouahch.

-In Tebessa (396 miles southeast of Algiers), a civilian was seriously injured in a bomb explosion.

-In Laghouat (250 miles southeast of Algiers), a shepherd was killed by two unknown assailants.

October 31:

-Security forces conducted a military operation in the el-Fadj region of Constantine following information received about the location of terrorists in the city, killing three terrorists and recovering semi-automatic rifles and propaganda materials.

-In Oum el-Bouaghi (312 miles southeast of Algiers), three assailants kidnapped an individual. Two kidnappers have been arrested while the third is still at large.

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